

First of all, seniors would get assistance immediately through the prescription drug card. And our neediest seniors would receive an additional \$600 on top of the discounts Medicare will provide through this card.

When the prescription drug program begins in 2006, under the Finance Committee bill, premiums would average \$35 a month.

After a \$275 deductible, the government would cover half of all prescription drug costs up to \$4,500.

Now, critics of this approach will claim that the so-called "doughnut hole" after \$4,500 will be the financial ruin of every senior. The truth is that the vast majority of seniors—80 percent—would never even hit the hole.

As a matter of fact, for 2003, the Kaiser Family Foundation estimates that the average Medicare beneficiary will consume approximately \$2,300 in pharmaceuticals. And should seniors consume over \$5,800 in prescription drugs, the Federal Government would pick up 90 percent of drug costs.

While this benefit will greatly help seniors throughout the Nation, there are still some seniors for whom the \$35 per month premium and additional cost-sharing is too high. For those individuals, the bipartisan Finance Committee bill provides protections that will allow access to prescription drugs.

For those seniors under 135 percent of poverty, \$12,123 for an individual and \$16,362 for a couple, the Finance Committee bill would provide a full subsidy for monthly premiums. In addition, the government would cover 95 percent of their prescription drug costs to the initial benefit limit and 97.5 percent above the stop-loss limit.

And for those seniors between 135 and 160 percent of the poverty level, S. 1 would provide assistance with their monthly premiums on a sliding scale. In addition, these individuals would pay no more than 50 percent of their drug costs once the \$250 deductible has been reached.

When we talk about dollars being spent, we should also point out to seniors that they will receive more bang for their buck under the Finance Committee bill through Medicare Advantage.

Under Medicare Advantage, seniors will not just receive direct assistance from the government to cover their prescription drug bills. Rather, private health plans will have to compete for beneficiaries and will attempt to attract seniors by providing the best health care plan—including prescription drugs and possibly preventive care, disease management, vision and dental services.

To the advantage of both Medicare beneficiaries and the Federal Government, this competition will decrease the price of prescription drugs and permit all parties to stretch their dollars further.

This body has been playing this political posturing game with senior's health care for too long.

I am tired of explaining partisanship as the excuse for the Senate's failure to pass a prescription drug benefit, which has forced the least of our brothers and sisters to choose between food and prescription drugs.

I am pleased that the Senate will have the opportunity to show the American people, especially our nation's seniors and disabled that we are serious about enacting legislation to provide a prescription drug benefit this year.

The bill before us seems to have broad support from both sides of the aisle. The President is ready and willing to sign a bill into law this year. It is time to get the job done.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that today after the consideration of S. 1, the Senate proceed to the consideration of Calendar No. 140, S. 504, and that it be considered under the following limitation: no amendments be in order, and there be 45 minutes equally divided for debate between Senator ALEXANDER and the ranking member or his designee; provided further that at the expiration of that time, the bill be read a third time, and the bill be set aside; provided that the Senate resume consideration of the bill upon convening on Friday, June 20, and that the time until 9:15 be equally divided for debate; further, that at 9:15 a.m. the Senate proceed to a vote on passage of the bill, with no intervening action or debate.

I also ask unanimous consent that following that vote, the Senate resume consideration of S. 1 and Dorgan amendment No. 946, and there then be 4 minutes of debate equally divided prior to the vote in relation to the amendment, with no further amendments in order to the amendment prior to the vote.

Finally, I ask unanimous consent that following the Harkin amendment, the next sequence of Democratic first-degree amendments be the following: Conrad, 2-year fallback; Pryor, reimportation; Kerry, grant program; Clinton, study; and Graham, premium.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Democratic whip.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I would ask the Senator to modify the request in this manner: First, I would control the time, rather than the ranking member, on the minority side on this bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection to the modification?

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I have no objection to the modification.

Mr. REID. Secondly, Mr. President, we have checked with the majority, and they have no problem with the fact that Senator PRYOR would offer his amendment on Monday rather than tomorrow. Even though he is in order following Senator CONRAD, I ask that he be allowed to offer his amendment on Monday.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection to the modified request?

Mr. REID. No objection.

Mr. ALEXANDER. No objection.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

AMERICAN HISTORY AND CIVICS EDUCATION ACT OF 2003

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I ask that the Senate proceed to S. 504, as under the order.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 504) to establish academies for teachers and students of American history and civics and a national alliance of teachers of American history and civics, and for other purposes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Who yields time?

The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. President, this week there was a great celebration of National History Day. There were high school students from all over the country in our offices and at the University of Maryland.

Last Friday, when I was sitting where the distinguished Senator from Minnesota now sits, presiding over the Senate, I had the privilege of hearing Senator BYRD deliver an address about Flag Day.

Since 9/11, President Bush has spoken more regularly about the American character. Suddenly, in our country there is a lot of interest in what it means to be an American.

In the mid-1990s, I read a book by Samuel Huntington, a professor at Harvard, called "Clash of Civilizations." A lot of people read that book in terms of understanding in what conflicts the United States, the West, might find in future years. But I read it for a different reason. It made me think that if the new world order was to be a group of civilizations whose differences began with their cultures, their religions, and a variety of other things that made them unique—it made me think if we were moving into that kind of an era, then maybe we ought to have a better understanding of just what made our culture unique. What did it mean to be an American?

I was invited to hold a professorship at Harvard University and taught in the John F. Kennedy School of Government there. And the course I taught was on the American character and on American Government. In that course, the graduate students applied the great principles which unite us as a country to the great controversies which we in the Senate debate—about race-based scholarships, about military tribunals, about faith-based institutions—and the conflicts of those principles. The students were fascinated by that.

And then suddenly I found myself, last year, in a Senate race that I did